

### Amendments to the Claims

1. (Currently amended) A process for producing a protein powder which comprises ~~contacting~~ applying or dropping a protein-containing solution ~~with~~ on a refrigerant carrier, freezing the solution at a cooling rate of about - 300 to - 10°C/min., and then drying the frozen solution.

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Currently amended) The process according to claim 2 1, wherein ~~a dropping fluid~~ the protein-containing solution is applied or dropped having a diameter of about 0.1 to 40 mm ~~diameter is applied or dropped~~.

4. (Original) The process according to claim 1, wherein freezing is carried out by preventing the protein-containing solution from direct contact with a liquid refrigerant.

5. (Original) The process according to claim 1, wherein a volatile salt or water-miscible organic solvent is added to the protein-containing solution.

6. (Original) The process according to claim 5, wherein the volatile salt is ammonium acetate.

7. (Currently amended) A protein powder ~~obtainable~~ obtained by the process according to claim 1.

8. (Original) The protein powder according to claim 7, wherein the protein has a molecular weight of about 5,000 to 1,000,000 dalton.

9. (Original)                      The protein powder according to claim 7, wherein the protein is selected from hormones, cytokines, hematopoietic factors, growth factors and enzymes.

10. (Original)                      The protein powder according to claim 7, wherein the protein is a growth hormone or insulin.

11. (Original)                      The protein powder according to claim 7, wherein the protein retains 45% or more of  $\alpha$ -helix based on the total  $\alpha$ -helix content in the protein-containing solution.

12. (Original)                      A process for producing a finely divided protein powder which comprises atomizing the protein powder according to claim 7.

13. (Original)                      The process according to claim 12, wherein the atomization is carried out so that a finely divided protein powder having an average particle size of about 0.5 to 20  $\mu\text{m}$  is obtained.

14. Currently amended)                      A sustained-release preparation which comprises the finely divided protein powder obtained by the process according to claim 12 and a base material.

15. (Original)                      The sustained-release preparation according to claim 14, wherein the base material of the sustained-release preparation is a material derived from a living body or a synthetic polymer.

16. (Original)                      The sustained-release preparation according to claim 15, wherein the material derived from a living body or a synthetic polymer is a biodegradable polymer.

17. (Cancelled)

18. (Currently amended)      A process for producing a sustained-release preparation which comprises ~~using~~ mixing the finely divided protein powder obtained by the process according to claim 12 with a base material.

19. (Cancelled)